



Testimony before the House Transportation Committee 5 March 2009

Regarding HB 4224

Good morning Madam Chair and Committee members. My name is Tom Barnes and I am the Executive Director for the Michigan Association of Timbermen (MAT). Our testimony is also supported by the Great Lakes Timber Professionals Association (GLTPA), combined our two Associations represent roughly 1000 logging professionals in Michigan. Both GLTPA and MAT supports House Bill 4224 which will modify section 257.719 of the Michigan Vehicle Code by allowing our members to travel on Michigan roads pulling a mobile loader and slasher. Currently, this combination is illegal as per section 257.719. The passing of House Bill 4224 would be a tremendous benefit for our logging and log truck industry.

This forest combination is used in the processing of trees at the forest landing. The slasher is connected to a mobile loader. This loader places delimbed trees in bunks and the slasher cuts these trees into different lengths depending on a logger market. The cut lengths would range from 8ft to 16ft. These two pieces of machinery are vital to the logging operation and our members can not afford to park them nor be ticketed every time they move them from job to job. This combination is moved from job to job within a radius of approximately 50 miles of loggers shop and typically has an escort vehicle following this unit for added safety precautions. Attached are some pictures to better demonstrate this combination.

This combination has been in existence in Michigan since the early 70's. We were unaware that this combination illegal. It wasn't until our members started receiving citation regarding this combination that it came to our attention that this was indeed an illegal combination. To our knowledge there have not been any major accidents regarding this combination and we feel it is a very safe way to transport this equipment. As the law stands the only other way to haul the slasher down the road would be behind a pickup truck, which, would be much more dangerous. These combinations are transported as per their manufactured design.

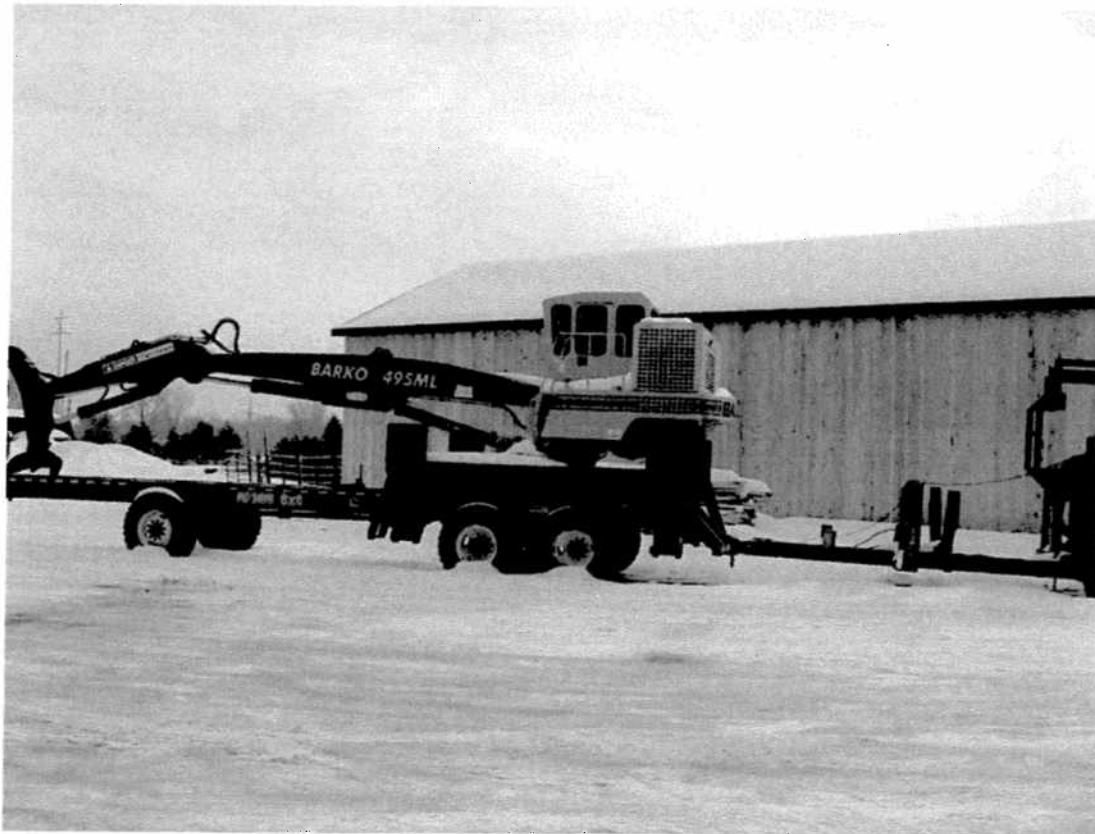
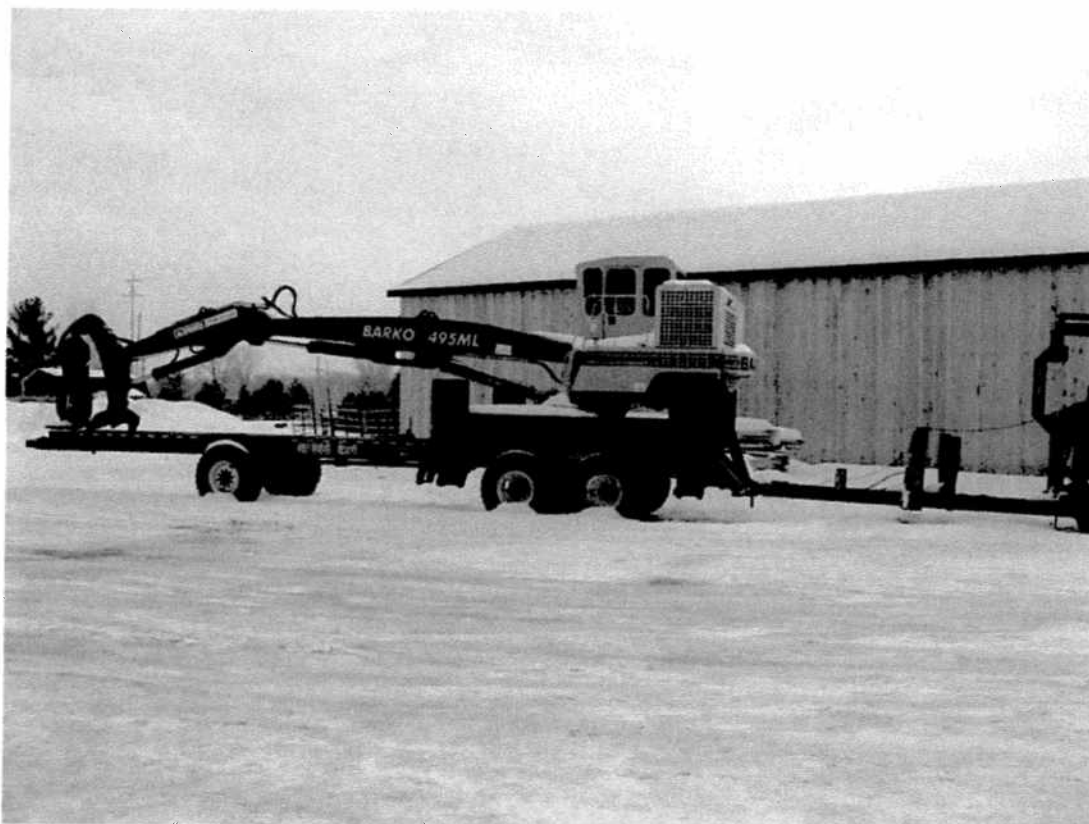
I have enclosed a letter from Captain Robert R. Powers Jr., Commanding Officer of the Traffic Safety Division pledging their willingness to collaborate with the Michigan Association of Timbermen in drafting legislation to allow this type of combination. We appreciate the help and willingness of MSP and Traffic Safety Division to help us with this issue.

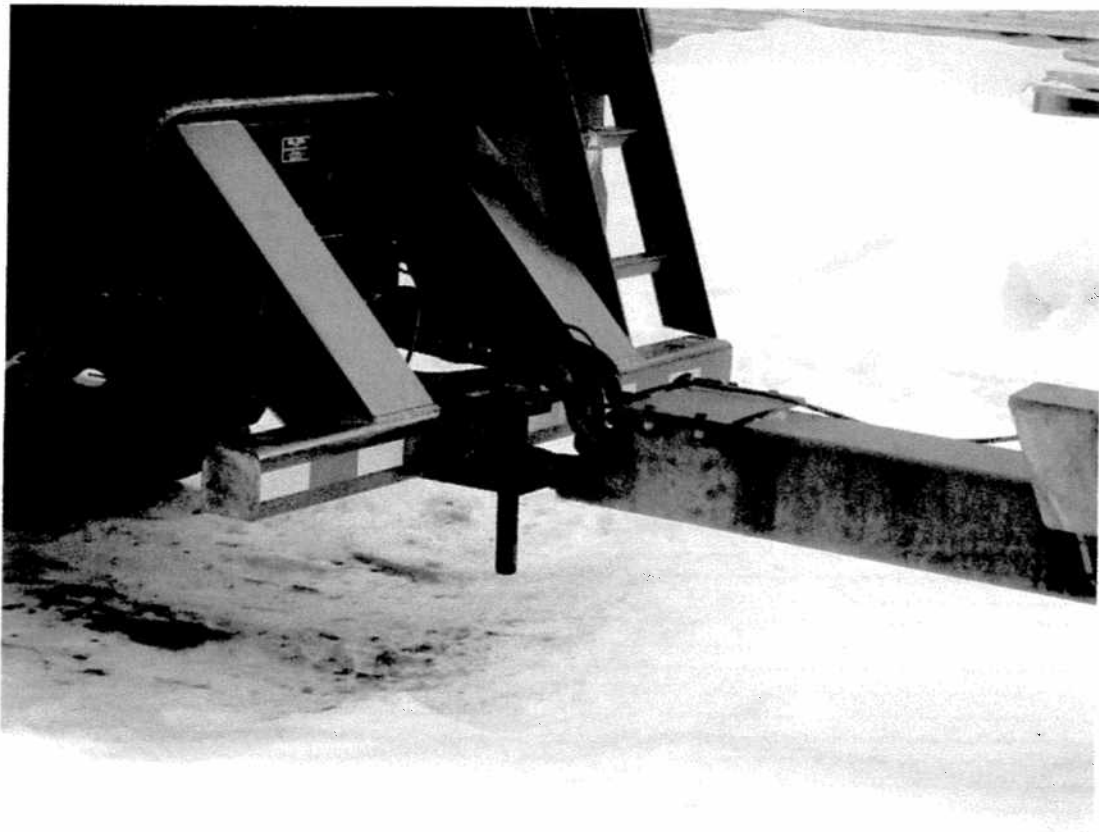
The Michigan Association of Timbermen and Great Lakes Timber Professionals Association support House Bill 4224. Not only will this bill improve our business practices it will also bring our members into compliance with the Michigan Vehicle Code. The passage of this important bill is a step in the right direction to retain and strengthen Michigan's forest products industry.

Submitted by

Tom Barnes
Executive Director
Michigan Association of Timbermen







August 28, 2007

Mr. Tom Barnes
Executive Director
Michigan Association of Timbermen
7350 South M-123
Newberry, Michigan 49868

Dear Mr. Barnes:

This correspondence is in response to your recent discussion with one of my staff, Lt. David Ford, regarding the legality of a slasher unit and a saw unit, in combination, being towed by a truck tractor.

The combination described above is in fact a violation of Section 257.719 of the Michigan Vehicle Code. As such, I do not have the legal authority to issue an enforcement moratorium with respect to the operation of such combinations on Michigan roadways.

My staff and I discussed at length the safety implications should legislative changes be introduced permitting the operation of the above described combination. The Traffic Safety Division is willing to work collaboratively with you and your staff to develop legislative language that will satisfy both your needs and our safety concerns. When you are ready to proceed with drafting the legislation, please contact Lt. David Ford at 517/336-6449, forddw@michigan.gov) as he will be our representative on this matter.

Sincerely,



ROBERT R. POWERS, JR., CAPTAIN
Commanding Officer
Traffic Safety Division

RRP/mb

cc: Mr. Marty Fittante, Rep. Casperson's Office
Sgt. Matt Bolger, MSP Executive Division